

THATCH EAVE MEMBER

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/390,374, filed on June 21, 2002.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to the field of roofing members used to create a durable, sturdy, water impermeable roof on a home, building or other structure. More particularly, the invention relates to such roofing members known as thatching, which are used to create what are termed thatch roofs, wherein the term thatch is taken to include both natural and synthetic materials. Even more particularly, the invention relates to discrete thatch members in the forms of shingles or rolls that are applied in multiples to the roof to provide the appearance of a natural thatch roof.

Thatch roofing has been used to create shelter from the elements of sun and rain for thousands of years. The type of thatch roofing often varies by region, with roofing in the Caribbean and South Pacific typically formed of grasses or palm fronds and presenting a generally loose or random appearance, while thatch roofing in Europe is typically formed of straw and reeds and presenting a more controlled or dressed look. Thatch may be made from natural elements such as straw, grasses, reeds, palm leaves or the like, and in modern times is also made from artificial or synthetic elements, typically composed of plastic, which are formed to present the appearance of natural thatch material. The modern thatch roofing members which incorporate artificial material are more durable, typically easier to construct and apply, and are

more resistant to mold, mildew and other forms of degradation or weathering. The overall appearance of the roof is more easily controlled.

Because the aesthetics of a thatched roof are unique, thatch roofing is gaining in popularity. Natural thatch is typically highly combustible, and therefore cannot pass building codes in many jurisdictions. Natural thatch is also very susceptible to rotting and degradation due to high humidity and moisture, and presents natural nesting material for insects, vermin and birds. Furthermore, natural thatching requires skilled artisans for the construction of the individual thatch members and for the installation of the roof - a skill which is rapidly disappearing. The development of synthetic or artificial thatching has lessened or obviated some of the these problems. The artificial thatching is typically produced in the form of rolls or shingles which are properly disposed on the roof to form a waterproof surface with a pleasing exterior. An example of artificial thatch elements is shown in my U.S. Patent No. 6,226,949, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

Since natural thatching consists of individual reeds, palm fronds, etc., multiple layers of such materials are necessary to form a water impermeable covering. Because of this necessity, the exposed ends or faces of the thatch elements along the eaves of the roof are relatively thick. In modern construction where artificial thatch elements are utilized, an underlayment of water impermeable sheet material allows the covering members to be produced as thin elements, thereby lowering manufacturing costs and easing application to form the roof. However, the use of thin shingles or rolls of synthetic thatch presents an undesirable appearance along the eaves of the building, since the entire thickness of the lowermost thatch shingle or roll is exposed to the observer. Since natural thatch roofs are by requirement relatively thick, this exposed thin edge indicates that the roof is not a true thatched roof, detracting from its appeal.

It is an object of this invention to provide an improved thatch roofing system and thatch roofing members, wherein relatively thin thatch shingles or rolls can be utilized to cover the major expanse of the roof, but wherein artificial eave members are provided which provide the illusion of a relatively thick thatch roof. It is an object to provide such artificial eave members for placement along the linear portions of the eave and at the corners, wherein the artificial eave members comprise a backing member for attachment to the edge of the eave below the upper roof surface, wherein a large number of reed members extend from the backing member and are sized such that their free ends present a generally planar, generally vertically disposed surface which is positioned even with the free ends of the lowermost shingle or roll member, giving the illusion that the lowermost thatch shingles or rolls, and therefore the entire roof, are much thicker than they actually are.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention is in general a thatch eave member, utilized in conjunction with known
5 thatch roof members formed as shingles or rolls of relatively thin thickness dimension, used in
multiples or in roll form to create a thatch roof on a structure which has the appearance of being
a relatively thick thatch, where the thatch eave member is formed from a large number of
individual thatch elements which are affixed to a backer member, such that all the thatch
elements are generally aligned in parallel fashion and extend in brush-like manner from the
10 backing member. The invention also comprises a roofing system containing the eave members
and roof thatch members in combination. The thatch elements may comprise natural materials,
such as for example straw, grasses, reeds, palm fronds, but more preferably comprise synthetic or
artificial materials such as plastic, where the artificial thatch elements are provided with the
visual appearance of natural thatch elements. The free ends of the thatch elements are exposed
15 and trimmed as required to create a generally planar surface or angled surface as required to
match the general plane containing the free ends of the thatch elements on the lowermost row of
roofing shingles or rolls, when the eave member is mounted along or below the eave of the roof.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a top view of the eave members, showing both linear and curved corner
5 members, with several thatch roofing elements in place over the eave members.

Figure 2 is a side view showing the eave members mounted on the depending surface
below the eave, showing the free ends aligned with the free ends of the roofing shingles.

Figure 3 is an exploded perspective view showing the eave members in more detail.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

With reference to the drawings, the invention will now be described in detail with regard
5 for the best mode and the preferred embodiments. In general, the invention comprises a thatch
eave member, as well as a system comprising one or more such members in combination with
thatch roofing members formed as shingles or rolls, wherein the eave member may be relatively
linear for positioning along the linear portion of an eave or curved, bent or angled to define a
corner member.

10 The eave member 14 comprises a relatively thick backer member 11, composed of
suitable material such as a polymer, wood, metal, fabric or the like, which is adapted to retain the
individual reeds or thatch elements 12 such that a dense expanse of free ends 13 project from the
exterior side of the backing member 11 in a brush-like manner, similar in configuration to a push
broom, for example. The density of the thatch elements 12 should be such that the backer
15 member 11 is not visible through the thatch elements 12. The thatch elements 12 may be
connected to the backing member 11 by any suitable means, including the use of binders or
adhesives, stitching, mechanical fastening, welding, melting, integral manufacturing processes or
the like. For example, a plastic or wooden backing member 11 may be provided with a large
number of apertures, into which individual thatch elements 12 or bundles of thatch elements 12
20 are inserted and secured by mechanical fasteners, such as staples, glue or like means. The thatch
elements 12 extend a short distance, approximately one to several inches for example, from the
backing member 11 in generally aligned or parallel manner, such that the free ends 13 may be

trimmed or manufactured to present a generally two-dimensional face or surface, preferably relatively planar, but curved, angled or textured faces may also be provided. The backing member 11 is of sufficient thickness such that the thatch elements 12 are held in a relatively rigid manner, and further such that the backing member 11 may be securely attached to the eave 99 or roof 98, typically to the depending edge board of the eave 99, in suitable fashion with the thatch elements 12 facing outward, either by direct connection to the backing member 11 or by providing additional connection mechanisms such as brackets or the like. The length of the thatch elements 12 may be relatively short in comparison to the length of the thatch elements 21 on the roof members 20 that are attached to the roof 98, since the eave members 14 are used less for function than for aesthetic purposes.

The thatch roof members 20 may be formed in any known manner, but typically comprise thatch elements 21 bound or connected to a binder, bracket or similar mounting member 23 adapted to be attached to the roof 98 using mechanical fasteners or similar means. To construct the thatch roof, the eave members 14 are attached along the eaves 99 or to the roof 98 by attaching the backer member 11 in a generally vertical manner such that a continuous expanse of thatch ends 13 face outwardly with the thatch elements 12 oriented in a relatively horizontal or downwardly sloping manner. The lowermost row of thatch roofing members 20 is then applied, either in roll form or as discrete shingles, by attaching the mounting members 23 to the roof 98 such that the lowermost rows of free ends 22 of the roof thatch elements 21 match up to the ends 13 of the eave members 14, as seen in Figures 1 and 2. In this manner, viewing the thatch roof from ground level presents the illusion that the entire roof is of a thickness equal to the combination of the eave members 11 and the thatch roofing members 20.

While the linear eave members 14 may merely be abutted at the corners of the eave 99, it is much preferred to provide a corner eave member 17. The corner eave member 17 to be utilized at a corner of the roof 98 is provided with a curved, bent or angled backing member 11, such that the free ends 13 extend over a 90 degree radius or angle, or over whatever radius or angle is necessary, in a curved or angled manner to meet the free ends 13 of the two adjacent linear eave members 11 in a seamless manner. As with the linear eave members 14, the lowermost thatch roofing member 20 is mounted on the corner of the roof 98 such that the free ends 22 of its thatch elements 21 blend with the free ends 13 of the thatch elements 12 of the corner eave member 17.

It is understood that certain equivalents and substitutions for elements set forth above may be obvious to those skilled in the art, and therefore the true scope and definition of the invention is to be as set forth in the following claims.